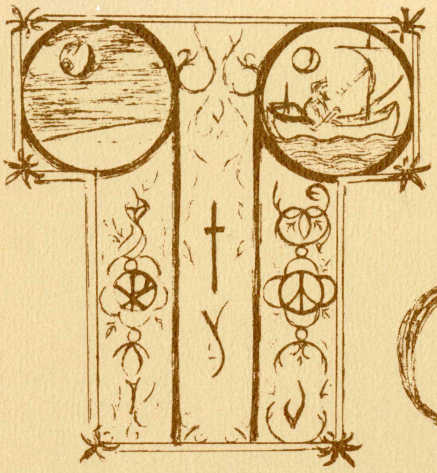
Spr '72
TAYLOR



The TOWER

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All is awake
All moves this night

The creatures of the warm day
Move in an easy manner
They dawdle on the warm pavement
with half closed eyes.
And deadened senses.

But these creatures of the night are alive
They scurry and chatter
In the cool night air.

There are the lone ones
Who pad among the shadows
With senses keen and receptive.

I know the ones of the water
Sleek and liquid as their home
Here they dart
Among the murky moving fingers
And shadows cast.

I see the creatures of the sky
Touch violet with their wings
These I envy
For their acquaintance with the moon
For they are unaccustomed
To the gray shadows of my world
Rather than the satin silver of the moon.

Ann Lawrence

The watchful movements of the moon
Are close-followed by her star children,
The small shadows
of sparkling dreams now fading—
Hungry for moon milk and mother love
Abandoned to spin out their existence
in bright lone splendor
Outside the magic circle of cacoon swaddle,
Sadly silent but for a whirling sound
Like low vaporous breaths,
Requests of death,
Laments of lost love.

Kathye Kerwan

Thresholds

VIKI BENSON

The sun beat down upon the small country town in a steady stream, as the sun in the fable, with no wind to disturb it. The main street looked deserted. There were a few cars parked at the stores and a few more at the town hall, but no life seemed to stir.

From a distance down this street truged an old man. He had thick iron grey hair, which Time had seen fit to leave in its same natural abundance as in youth. His eyes were hard and piercing, as though they could see right through a person, yet they were also somehow kindly and understanding. His form was slim, with a spark of sprightliness unusual for his years.

His progress was slow, filled with pauses in which he would chat with a neighbor, pet a dog, or just rest and wipe the perspiration from his forehead. All the townspeople knew him; he was an institution, like the monuments you see of Confederate heroes posed on horses in the town squares of those small towns in the movies that look as if they had been lain out in careful precision. This was not one of those towns. This town seemed to have just happened many years ago. And it seemed that for just those many years, the old man had been trudging down the street every morning and back again in the evening, as dependable as the seasons, as if he were one of the Fates, spinning the lives of the townspeople.

He finally came in sight of his destination, an old tumbled-down store right in the middle of town. Most of the townspeople could not remember when this store had been anything other than what it was now. In fact, no one seemed to know exactly what it had been; some said a drug store, others a post office, some even a saloon. But the old man was one of the few who knew for certain. Every day he came there, like a pilgrim journeying to Mecca, to sit on the grey old bench in front of the store and watch the people go by.

On this particular day, however, he found his bench occupied by a young boy. The boy was bent over with his head buried in his arms and his body was shaking with what appeared to be sobs. A more careful examination, however, revealed that the boy was not a boy at all. The old man took a seat on the bench beside its distraught tenant.

"Hello, Beth," he said gently.

The weeping form jumped with surprise and raised up to look at the intruder.

"Hello, Mr. Blake," she replied, wiping her eyes with her hand. She was fourteen years old, a tall, gawky girl, balanced on the precipice of adolescence, looking unlecided as to whether she wanted to remain a little girl or become a woman. Her brown hair was cropped short like a boy's, in defiance not only of her age but also of the sex which Fate had given her.

"What's th' matter, Beth?" Mr. Blake asked her.

"Nothin's th' matter," she sniffed. Clasping her hands, she rested them between her outstretched legs and began to shake her legs nervously. "I didn't wanna play football with th' stupid, diot, dum-dums, anyway!"

"They wouldn't let you play football with 'em?"

"No. They said girls just couldn't play tackle football. They let me play baseball with 'em th' whole goddam summer long! It's not fair! It's just not fair!" She began to cry again and the old man put a withered hand on the cropped head.

"Beth, you're just gittin' too old to play rough games with boys," he said kindly.

"No!" she roared, leaping to her feet. "Don't say that! Don't say that ever, ever again! I'm not too old. I gotta long time yet before I'll be a grown-up. A long time!" She stood there, sobbing with anger and fear, and wiped her nose on her bare arm. "I'm not too old. Not yet," she said wistfully and leaned against an old post in a pose which looked almost womanly.

A mass of contradictions, Mr. Blake thought to himself and smiled sadly. "No, Beth, you're not too old. Not yet."

* * *

It was only a few afternoons later that he saw her again. She emerged from the store next door with a Coke in one hand, a candy bar in the other, and her school books under her arm. Her hands were so full she had to open the door with her behind and slide out.

"When'ju go on a diet, Beth?" Mr. Blake called.

She grinned and came up the sidewalk steps to speak to him. She was wearing a school outfit, a red plaid skirt and a red sweater that went well with her dark features but looked strangely incongrous with her boyish haircut. "Hello, Mr. Blake," she said and threw her books on the steps of the old store.

"How've you been doin', Beth?" he asked.

"Terrible, terrible. I'm flunkin'."

"What're you flunkin'?"

"Most ever'thing. 'Cept P.E. an' English an' history, that is. I was flunkin' English, but then they got on somethin' good so now I got a D. I really do. An' I gotta A in history. I really go for history. I'll be glad when I get to take World History. That's gonna be fun."

"But, Beth, you can't just concentrate on th' subjects you like an' let all th' others go t' pot."

"Why not?"

" 'Cause you'll fail—just like you're doin' now."

"Nah. I'll pull 'em up one of these days."

She took hold of one of the posts and began to swing around it. "Did your kids always make good grades, Mr. Blake?"

"Well, yeah, usually. But back then their mother was alive an' she'd help 'em with their homework." His eyes took on the faraway look of reminiscence as the images, like snapshots of long ago, began to come back to him. "I can see 'em now. Th' kids settin' at th's kitchen table an' Mattie at th' stove."

The girl stopped her seemingly perpetual motion and, dropping down on the bench beside him, said with genuine interest, "What did your wife look like, Mr. Blake?"

"Oh, she was a beauty. A real beauty," he replied smiling. "I was lucky to have got her. She had kinda reddish-brown hair an' big brown eyes. Sorta th' color of yours. An' popular? Why, she was th' belle of th' whole county."

Beth smiled at the old man's pleasure. "Yeah, I can picture her. I bet she looked kinda like Carrie, huh?"

Mr. Blake started, as if awakened from a dream. "Yeah, kinda . . . But Mattie's gone now," he continued sadly, "an' Carrie's all grown. An' I wish they'l let me go t' th' ol' folks home."

"You mean you *wanta* go t' th' ol' folks home?"

"Yeah, Beth, I do. I've already become a burden to 'em."

"But, Mr. Blake. Most ol' folks are just beggin' their kids not t' send 'em t' th' ol' folks home. An' here you are wantin' t' go?"

"Beth," he began slowly, pronouncing his words very carefully, "my sister kept our mother until she died an' she was always mighty proud of it. 'I done my

duty,' she would say. 'I done my duty.' But, Beth, before our mother died, my sister was resentin' her somethin' terrible. In fact, I believe that there were times when she actually hated our mother. But you couldn't blame her. For years, she was just tied to her. She couldn't even go t' th' store without gittin' somebody t' watch her. She had t' wait on her hand an' foot. You couldn't blame her for gittin' tired of it after awhile. Do you understand, Beth?"

Beth nodded. "Yessir. I understand."

There was a long silence and finally Mr. Blake said, "What will your brother-in-law think about your grades?"

"You mean Peter?"

"Nah, I mean Calvin Coolidge. How many brother-in-laws do you have?"

She laughed appreciatively—sarcasm delighted her—and the old man was pleased with his effect. He rarely used sarcasm.

"He'll probably cuss me out," she replied flippantly, "an' tell me he knows I can do better than that an' anybody who can make a A in history can make a A in ever'thing else."

"You think so?" the old man asked.

She thought seriously for a few seconds and then said, "Nah, nah, I guess not. Now Sis will. Sis can act pretty bitchy when she gits t' feelin' big nigger. But Peter—he's okay. He really is. Why, when Bitchy Nancy's not around, he acts positively human!"

The tide of her condemnation had turned and now she was speaking in tones of definite admiration. "Sometimes we play poker together. Not with real money, of course. Just monopoly money. Or sometimes pennies. Bitchy Nancy always gits mad at him an' tells him he's 'corrupting my morals.' Then he laughs an' tells her that *I* was th' one who taught *him* how t' play. He's just sayin' that, of course. It's not true. But it's funny. An' when Nancy's not there, he lets me come in his room an' watch T.V. with him. He's a cool ol' guy. He really is. I don't see why he married my bitchy sister. She's got him henpecked. She really does."

"Now, Beth, you shouldn't talk that way about your sister," Mr. Blake admonished. "She's been mighty good t' you. Why, they hadn't been married too long when your Mama died, had they?"

"Long enough," replied Beth firmly, "an' she's still a bitch."

* * *

A few afternoons later, Beth returned to the grey old store. Mr. Blake immediately sensed that something was bothering her. She was quiet and her eyes were sad, far from her usual girlish exuberance. She sank despondently onto the sidewalk steps and sighed.

"They won't let you play football again, Beth?" asked Mr. Blake sympathetically.

"No, it's not that," she replied sadly. "I don't wanna play football with th' stupid bastards anymore, anyway."

"Then what's th' matter?"

"Sis is a bitch. A real bitch. But Peter—he's an okay guy. He really is, Mr. Blake."

"Yes, I know, Beth. I've known him since he was born."

"He's really sweet. He really is."

"I know, Beth."

She sank down upon her elbows. "I think he looks so nice."

There was a long heavy silence and then Mr. Blake said quietly, "Beth?"

"Yessir?"

"I think you're gittin' some ideas in your head that you best not git."

"Yessir."

"He's married, you know."

"Yessir."

"To your sister."

"Yessir."

"An' he's a lot older than you."

"Yessir."

"At least twelve or thirteen years."

"Twelve."

"Beth," he said kindly, "it's not that there's anything wrong with it. I mean, it's not really like breakin' th' seventh commandment or such. Ever little girl has a crush on a older man, a teacher or somethin', at some time. But, after all, he *is* your brother-in-law. An' you're bound t' wind up bein' disappointed. You know that, don't you?"

She nodded. "But I can't help it. I swear he must have th' cutest goddam smile in th' whole goddam universe!"

"Beth, you better just forgit about it," he warned.

"I know."

"Promise me you'll try."

"Okay."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

He sat watching her face and sighed.

* * *

Knowing how girls Beth's age can work themselves into a depression, Mr. Blake was anxious to see her again to try to cheer her up. But the days faded into weeks and there was still no sign of her. At first he allowed himself to indulge in self-pity, believing that she had simply grown tired of his company. Then, however, he managed to bring himself out of it to realize that it was not like Beth to just desert him. He began to grow worried. She could have been in an accident or something. He asked his daughter but she had heard nothing, which was unusual for the small town in which they lived. His concern was beginning to mount into frantic alarm when he saw Peter coming out of the store next door. Anxiously, he called to him and the young man respectfully mounted the sidewalk steps to the old store.

"Peter, what's happened to Beth? I haven't seen her lately."

"She's gone, Mr. Blake," Peter replied. There was an indefinable air of mystery about him, a look of confusion. Perhaps no one else might have noticed it, but the old man had not lived all the many years without having learned something about people. He saw it immediately.

"Gone?" he asked. "Where could she have gone to? She lives with you an' Nancy. Don't she?"

Peter shook his head. "Not anymore. She's gone to live with her aunt and uncle in Huntsville. She'll like it there. It's a big city. She . . ."

"But she liked it *here*," Mr. Blake interrupted.

"Well, we all talked it over," Peter said. He seemed to be growing more uncomfortable by the moment. "We all decided it would be for the best."

"Wait, wait," the old man said in confusion. "Let me git this straight. I don't understand. Why, just the other day she was talkin' about . . ." He stopped. He must organize his thoughts. He couldn't let Time confuse him. Not now. Not when he had to get this straightened out. The eyes . . . What did the eyes mean? Suddenly, he straightened up.

"All for th' best," he said slowly. "Yes, I understand."

Peter nodded and, after saying a feeble goodbye, returned to his car. The old man turned in the opposite direction and began his journey home a full two hours earlier than usual. He understood.

It is a good time for drinking men.
Tonight there is plenty and many are following my example,
Filling themselves with easy flowing wine. Trying to wash
From the memory the dread of the last ten years,
The horror of the seige, the visions of the bloodied men
Returning from the contest, fatigued and wounded till
They plead for death, the surviving men and lonesome
Women drink till their minds are set free from
The overwhelming guilt of a worthless victory.
Now they are reaching beyond reality,
As I was the day they wheeled the Great Horse
In. That day as they strained and toiled
And finally drew it within our gates I laughed
And called them fools to work so hard
For a useless symbol. Then my laughter choked
In my throat for they appeared as jackals tearing
At the carcass of an ass, never
Noticing the poison which rapidly is eating through
The lifeless bones, which soon will consume them.
They laughed when I told of this vision and
Said that with my faultless eyesight I should be
The perfect guard to keep the huge wooden
Creature from running away.

So tonight I stand apart from the others
Whose celebration has turned to slumber and watch
Their drunken dreams float up to a moonless sky.
I watch my dreams as clouded as the sky reach
For the God's favor and return as empty as before.
Now I turn to gaze upon the Horse, empty as the
Forgotten dreams of men, emptying from its stomach
Cursed warriors with swords and spears
Eager to kill again. And I turn to warn
The sleeping people. I start to run to cry out
And the spider reaches out with his hand and
I am in King's Palace.

Philip McEntee

MY LOTTERY NUMBER'S 32, WHAT'S YOURS

People at the Pentagon wrote me a letter
Said son we want you to go to war
Kill for freedom and mom's apple pie
Don't even know how to tie my shoe
Have a bad cough
and I'm skinny too.
The guy next door goes huntin everyday
doesn't even smoke
Sent back that letter, said the address has
been changed
Why that boy left twelve years ago
They caught me in Vicksburg
gave me a gun
with real bullets
Make me kill this target time after time
Sent me to the jungle with a cold can of soup
Well I put down that damn gun and made that
can of soup hot
And Bye God I ate every bit of it
But we lost the war . . . .

Michael Kieth Nichols

The round, full earth mother
watches the strong brown back
of her husband as he leaves for the plow.
She runs and kisses hungrily
his sweat-stained back.

He turns with a smile, flashing white,
corn-flower eyes and sun-gold hair
and with massive hands cups her
earth and laughs and turns to the plow.

She watches as he labors and sees
and knows the promise of seed-sowing
by day and by night.

Hawg

ALONG THE ILLINOIS BANK

And floating house is river-swept,
equilibrium vanished in the current,
hurricane deposit—now aquatic relic

gabled roof beneath trees on the bank,
home in the Mississippi,
flooded first floor filled with rubbish,
up the carven stairrail the rooms dry
and empty of hysteria, all fled,
now calm and flowing
white wood in muddy, muddy water

furnishings in frantic disarray—
ornate orphans of the storm

windows weed-infested—flowers
sown with storm-planting
the view is jarred by the
Mississippi

Floating, hanging in suspension,
journey along the Illinois bank
white house in odyssey

Ed Jackson

JOHN THE ESSENE

Writhing, chanting prayers
beneath blazing Judae sun
often mortifying flash, the transient
visions in and out

The celebate in animal hide, Elijah of
the shore, bearing witness of the light
as he dines on wild honey and locusts

John the Essene fearing betrayal, then
imprisoned, dancing Salome demanding

bearded flesh still shivering from the
axe,
the head in amber
time opening cold
unfueled eyes,
speaking with fled breath of a prophecy
found in the entrails of wild animals
glowing red eyes
roving from face to
face from their
distance above the
serving plate,
the quaking king finding amber time
melting,
flowing down in
frenzied terror

Ed Jackson

NEVER IMPRISON ANYTHING

An eagle is a joyless thing
With dead dreams in his eyes;
Yet I have never seen the eyes of eagles
Circling a sunset sky . . .
Only caged ones, too haughty
Or too hopeless, to ask for pity.

Never imprison anything
Be it man or creature,
Be it enemy or loved one.
Open the door and let him soar for
Underneath are the Everlasting Arms!

Barbara Gooden

LAMENT FOR DAVID

He watches
With large eyes
As the world happens
Around him
He sees
With unknown mind
As love flows
Around him
Come let us mourn him
Let us chant the canticle
Of life in death for him
Let us view the catafalque
As he views us
He feels with cryptic heart
As vibrations move
Around him
He watches, he sees, he feels
He thinks but does not know he thinks
Rest in peace. Amen.

Hawg

THE INEVITABLE DEATH POEM THAT ALL ASPIRING YOUNG POETS EVENTUALLY MUST WRITE

I was born.
I must die.
Some might mourn.
Some will cry.

Songs will be sung.
Prayers will be prayed.
Flowers will be hung
Over where I am laid.

And for once,
I hope it will be
A funeral
That will not bother me.

Frank R. Smith

Because you love her,
I'll tie ribbons to her name
And speak thoughts of her in broad leisure;
And when she enters,
When you ask her to remain,
I'll close the closet door before my face
And soundlessly echo your pleasure
And whisper words to supplement your grace.

Because you love her,
I'll build reinforced sun castles
And soak up the sad and harsh puddles;
And when you lose her,
Disentangle ivy trestles,
I'll close the French sun windows to the pier,
Remembering her name because you will
And being close enough to share the fire.

Martha Headley

GWYNDOLYN

The fog rises out of the soggy ground,
Cold, odorless smoke from a wet smoldering
Of green, slower than sight but quicker than days, browning
Into the gradual death that comes without sound.

Gwyndolyn peers through the mist from a stone
Scabbed and gray where the moss has starved,
Looking for the other stone on which is carved
A name, skeleton letters where meaning has flown.

As the fog in nets of dry branches is wrapped,
So is Gwyn's hair in a bridal veil of flowered vines,
Brown petaled, in a stiff embrace entwined,
Unyielding unless breaking with a snap—

Then silence, like the spaces between each tapping
On her door of gentlemen who come to call,
Like the spaces between each receeding footfall
Or between each beat of a stone heart's clicking.

The fog lifts and the gray light crowds down
From the clouds on Gwyndolyn's stone tower,
Crusting slowly with dead moss, silent power
Of the gradual death that comes without sound.

Harvey Estes

SCHOOLGIRL CRUSH

Too young to seek corporeal truth,
Too old to play her childhood part
Of island-self, her dreams impart
To him the longings of her youth.

Reality repells, uncouth
And frightening, yet there the start
Of wisdom beckons, though her heart
Might, childish, yearn to mimic Ruth.

The world's door waits an interlude
And then she passes through.
Knowing her debt, her gratitude
To one she never knew.

Kathie Farnell

ASHES DRIFTING

the salt of the earth aggravates his thirst
and discontent runs with adrenelin force;
tenseness carves flesh into warrior statue;
the same shining knife cuts a path through
the planted field.
pulse pounds the reef and the warrior sets
the field aflame. the cultivated earth is
laid waste; the force within him feeds upon
the heat and flame.
in scant moments the fruit of his labor
ascends unto heaven, and he, earth-bound,
stands amid the choaking smoke, cooled by
the black wind.
field burning with hysterical swiftness, he
kicks the piling ashes, scatters them with joy
as he inhales the harshness of the smoke.
rushes rise in his body.
he runs amidst the ashes drifting,
bodily explosion as all is consumed,
exultation at the ashes.

Ed Jackson

ROCK-N-ROLL

Well I
Walked down the hall
Went into the bedroom and saw you lyin' there
I opened the closet door
put on my fancy robe, with the red star on the back

Hada sit down and think it over
Then I stood up put on my P.F. flyers
said baby let's go
We went

Then we came
O it was fine, rolled in on a cloud of dust
The salvation army marchin' right behind
Three clowns and a spade singin' the blues
Didn't wake up
til three days later . . .

Michael Keith Nichols

DUPE of bile

*A MANN named OLIVER Crumm
HAd naught FOR A hand butta trummb)
'HE THOUGHT hee was smart
"THE Crippled old FART
hwen he read four the DEAf and the DUMMB#

the hairlip had written a buch:
BYE Welding a QUill to his hook
he looked quite ABsurD
(the Catholic turd)
his eye had an ORGASMIC look

he was thought tobee kind
when he MIMED for the blind
/a slug that really could act/
he fenced with a sword until hee was gored
the scabless HEMOPHYLIAC@@@

HWICH just goes to shore
a man whose abore
will slowly but slowly Decline
GOne butt forgotten
his bones getting rotten
WHILE his wife slaves inna SALT mine

CHuck YOakum
"(:SPECS:)"

What will I do when you go?
Without you as an axis,
My world will go spinning into space
And crash on the far points
Of a scattered universe.

Jere Jackson

My old car rests in a vacant lot
Like a tank at the bottom of Tokyo harbor
That was surprised as the cameras of fate
Focused on the Emperor's bad side
And was sunken beyond the consideration
Of any good film producer.

And nearby, stick-gun soldiers are playing
Temporarily killing Japs
On islands of Smith and Jones Realty.
I watch and am napping, watch and am napping,
Catching images inside my eyelids,
Hanging negatives in dark rooms of memory

So that I can keep a few photographs,
For some reason, from this plotless movie.

Harvey Estes

PELLEGRA FEAST

Coming up, rising, seeing in the distance
holes of clear blue, straining to meet them,
coming forth, growing, standing in the wind.
harvested, green and yellow stalks looking
up at assembled faces around a table.
having risen, to descend again, descending
in spoonful after spoonful after spoonful,
in week after week until those faces are frozen,
staring at the ceiling. Their fuel has frozen
them in its lacking,
frozen the family in motion of pellegra feast,
coarse cloth garbed bodies heavy on quilts,
their harvest has ended.

Ed Jackson

EPILOGUE

The firebird has flown from
the North Country
On her delicate pearl-webbed wings;
There's a bounty on her body
but her spirit is still free
And in the early morning she still sings.

Kathye Kerwan

TO NO ONE IN GENERAL AND EVERYONE IN PARTICULAR

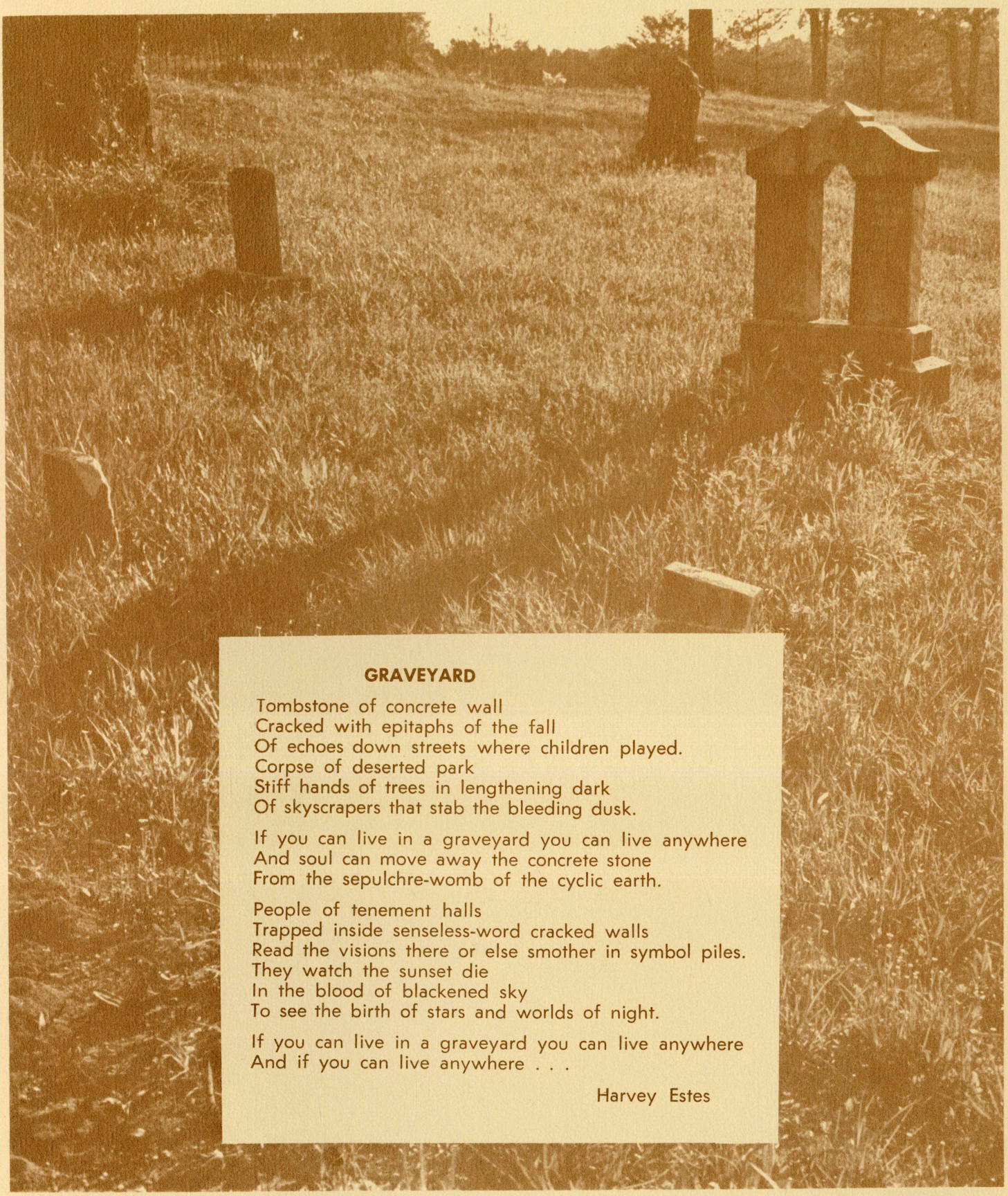
God, that my days
might be counted as the warm sand
falling through your fingers.

Through green-leaf days
We might laugh and sing and
Your love-scent would linger.

Did we grow
As trees
Thrusting deep into soil and rock?
Or as corn and maize
Shallow-rooting but fruitful?

Did we count ways
golden mornings touch our bodies and
We touch and sing.

Hawg



GRAVEYARD

Tombstone of concrete wall
Cracked with epitaphs of the fall
Of echoes down streets where children played.
Corpse of deserted park
Stiff hands of trees in lengthening dark
Of skyscrapers that stab the bleeding dusk.

If you can live in a graveyard you can live anywhere
And soul can move away the concrete stone
From the sepulchre-womb of the cyclic earth.

People of tenement halls
Trapped inside senseless-word cracked walls
Read the visions there or else smother in symbol piles.
They watch the sunset die
In the blood of blackened sky
To see the birth of stars and worlds of night.

If you can live in a graveyard you can live anywhere
And if you can live anywhere . . .

Harvey Estes

T7.1-3